

APPENDIX E

EMPLOYMENT

Despite their Post-Civil War development, modern machine guns did not exhibit their full potential in battle until World War I. Although the machine gun has changed, the role of the machine gunner has not. The mission of machine guns in battle is to deliver fires when and where the leader wants them in both the offense and defense. Machine guns rarely, if ever, have independent missions. Instead, they provide their unit with accurate, heavy fires to accomplish the mission. This appendix provides information on three machine guns: the M249 light machine gun and the M60 and M240B general-purpose machine guns.

E-1. TACTICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MACHINE GUN

The accomplishment of the mission demands an efficient machine gun crew who can fulfill all assigned missions. Each leader considers the mission and organizes machine guns to deliver firepower and fire support to any area or point needed to accomplish the assigned mission. Such organization takes time to achieve and reduces the flexibility of the unit.

E-2. MACHINE GUN IN THE ATTACK

The potential increase of air and ground attacks on the unit demands every possible precaution for maximum security while on the move. Where this situation exists, the machine gun crew must be thoroughly trained in the hasty delivery of antiaircraft fire and of counterfires against enemy ground forces. The distribution of the machine guns in the formation is critical. The machine gun crew is constantly on the alert, particularly at halts, ready to deliver fire as soon as possible. If the leader expects a halt to exceed a brief period, he carefully chooses machine gun positions to avoid unduly tiring the machine gun crew. If he expects the halt to extend for a long period, he can have the machine gun crew take up positions in support of the unit. They cover the direction from which he expects enemy activity as well as the direction the unit came from. He selects positions that permit the delivery of fire in the most probable direction of attack, such as into valleys, draws, ridges, and spurs. He chooses positions that offer obstructed fire.

a. Machine Gun in the Offense.

(1) *General Discussion.* Successful offensive operations result from the employment of fire and maneuver. Each is essential and greatly depends upon the other. Without the support of covering fires, maneuvering in the presence of enemy fire can result in disastrous losses. Covering fires, especially those that provide fire superiority, allow maneuvering in the offense. However, fire superiority alone rarely wins battles. The primary objective of the offense is to advance, occupy, and hold the enemy position.

(2) *Machine Gun.* The machine gun delivers an accurate, high-volume rate of fire on fairly large areas in a brief time. It is a great power to have on any offensive operation. When accurately placed on the enemy position, machine gun fires secure the essential element of fire superiority for the duration of the firing. Troops advancing in the attack should take full advantage of this period to maneuver to a favorable position from which

to facilitate the last push against the enemy. In addition to casualties, machine gun fire destroys the enemy's confidence and neutralizes his [actions in the?] defense.

(3) *Early Entry*. The early entry of machine guns in the offense is, with rare exceptions, highly desirable. Their continued action up to the moment of the assault enhances the probability of success. One desirable feature for employment of machine guns in the offense requires a proper handling of the ammunition for each machine gun. The other feature is to determine the actions of the machine gun crew to handle their weapon on the battlefield in order to deliver fire with the objective to support the maneuver unit at the time it is needed, regardless of physical difficulties encountered

(a) The machine guns seldom accompany the maneuver element. The gun's primary mission is to provide covering fire. The machine guns are only employed with the maneuver element when the area or zone of action assigned to the assault or company is too narrow to permit proper control of the guns. The machine guns are then moved with the unit and readied to employ on order from the leader and in the direction needing the supporting fire.

(b) Where the area or zone of action is too wide to allow proper coverage by the machine guns, the unit is assigned additional machine guns or personnel from within the battalion to permit the unit to accomplish its assigned mission. The machine guns are assigned a zone or a sector to cover and they move with the maneuver element.

(c) Under certain terrain conditions and for proper control, the machine guns move with the unit and are assigned a zone or sector to cover.

(d) When machine guns move with the unit undertaking the assault, the unit brings its machine guns to provide additional firepower. These weapons are fired either from the bipod or in an assault mode, from the hip or underarm position. They target enemy automatic weapons anywhere on the unit's objective. Once the enemy's automatic weapons have been destroyed, or if there are none, the gunners distribute their fire over their assigned zone or sector. In terms of engagement ranges, the machine gun in the assault engages within 300 meters of its target and frequently at point blank ranges.

c. **Machine Gun in a Base-of-Fire Element**. Machine guns organic to the company can help battalion machine guns lay the base of fire. In this case, the leader positions and controls the fires of all machine guns in the element. Machine gun targets include key enemy weapons or groups of enemy targets either on the objective or attempting to reinforce or counterattack. In terms of engagement ranges, machine guns in the base-of-fire element may find themselves firing at targets within 800 meters of the target. These ranges are simply a practical average. The nature of the terrain and desire to achieve some standoff, leads the leader to the correct tactical positioning of the base-of-fire element.

E-3. MACHINE GUN IN THE DEFENSE

Machine gun fire is distributed in width and depth in a defensive position. The leader can use machine guns to subject the enemy to increasingly devastating fire from the initial phases of his attack, and to neutralize any partial successes the enemy might attain by delivering intense fires in support of counterattacks. The machine gun's tremendous firepower is what enables the unit to hold ground. This is what makes them the backbone or framework of the defense.

a. The units' defense centers around the platoon's machine guns. The platoon leader sites the rifle squad to protect the machine guns against the assault of a dismounted enemy formation. The machine gun provides the requisite range and volume of fire to cover the squad front in the defense.

b. The primary requirement of a suitable machine gun position in the defense is that the machine gun be able to accomplish its specific missions. Secondarily, the position should be accessible and afford cover and concealment. Machine guns are sited to protect the front, flanks, and rear of occupied portions of the defensive position, and to be mutually supporting. Attacking troops usually seek easily traveled ground that provides cover from fire. This is not to say that they will avoid marshes, rough grounds, wooded areas, or any other type of terrain. Every machine gun should have three positions: primary, alternate, and supplementary. All of these positions should be chosen by the leader to ensure his sector is covered and that the machine guns are protected on their flanks.

c. The leader sites his machine gun to cover the entire sector or to overlap sectors with the other machine gun. The engagement range of a leader's weapon may extend from the last 300 meters where the enemy begins his assault to point-blank range. Machine gun targets include enemy automatic weapons and command and control elements.

E-4. MACHINE GUN ON A SECURITY MISSION

Security includes all command measures to protect against surprise, observation, and annoyance by the enemy. The principal security measures against ground forces include employment of security patrols and detachments covering the front flanks and rear of the units' most vulnerable areas. The composition and strength of these detachments depends on the size of the main body, its mission, and the nature of the opposition expected. The presence of machine guns with security detachments augments their firepower to effectively delay, attack, and defend, by virtue of their inherent firepower. When the machine guns are used as part of the security detachments in battalion trains or larger, the proportion of machine guns in such a detachment varies according to the situation. The main mission of the machine gun is to protect and defend through both defensive and offensive missions. For defense, the unit's main mission is to position the machine guns throughout the assigned area. For offense, the second mission, after a successful delay against an enemy attack, the unit expands its security outpost as needed to prevent another enemy attack.